



XLR8 STEM Academy

Senior Internship Experience

Spring 2026

OVERVIEW

The essential component of a successful internship is that the student **actively participates** in an area of interest under the guidance of a mentor. Different mentors' approach this in diverse ways. Some mentors design a special project specifically designed for the student to develop his/her skills. Others bring the student into an ongoing project which may require the student to either work in collaboration with other colleagues or to work independently on one aspect of the project which the student is capable of undertaking with minimal supervision. In general, internships in the business community include the intern's participation in professionally related activities. The internship may be in any discipline or involve any profession; however, it is **mandatory that the student be an active participant** in activities related to the field of study.

It is just as important to define what an internship is not, as well as what it is. Internship is not meant to provide workers for laboratory assistance or office help. While students will certainly be exposed to career and work information, this is not the focus of their participation in the Senior Internship Experience program. The purpose of the internship is active participation in a selected area of study. Students, however, are expected to perform all relevant duties, including such tasks as record keeping, filing, etc., since they are expected to be integral members of the team.

The Senior Experience internship is an interactive learning partnership through which students increase, in depth and scope, their knowledge and abilities in a selected area of study under the guidance of a mentor(s).

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- The Senior Internship is a board-approved requirement for which students receive one **(1) dual-enrollment academic credit** in their senior year at the XLR8 STEM Academy
- Student interns report directly to the internship every **Wednesday** during the spring semester of their senior year during STEM Academy time for an average of 3.75-4 hours per week.
 - There is a minimum requirement for a total of 60 internship hours.
 - **Internship Dates are below:**
 - January 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th
 - February 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th
 - March 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th
 - April 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd
- Mentorship may be provided by **one or more individuals** within the organization who take an active interest in the student's growth and development as an intern.

- Most Senior Internships are for learning purposes only and do not involve **monetary compensation** to the student.
- A **Learning Agreement** outlines the scope of duties, responsibilities and goals developed collaboratively by the student, mentor and internship coordinator before the internship begins.
- The program culminates with the **Senior Internship Luncheon**; a final, highly personalized presentation made by the student to the STEM Academy community, mentors, and invited guests. This will be held **on Wednesday, April 24th, 2024, with** the planned format to be in person.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROGRAM

The Senior Internship Experience is planned for beginning in the spring of the junior year and final internship placements are made in the fall semester of the students' senior year. Internship placements are made based upon the student's interest, ability, and commitment. Each student intern is responsible for meeting the following program requirements:

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| ○ Application for CVCC Internship | ○ Daily Log sheets |
| ○ Resume | ○ Written Self-Evaluation |
| ○ Teacher Recommendations | ○ Student Presentation |
| ○ Student Agreement | ○ Mentor Evaluation |
| ○ Class Schedule | ○ On Site Visits |
| ○ Learning Agreement | |

Application for CVCC Internship: Application required by Central VA Community College (CVCC) for students wanting to earn an academic credit for their internship experience.

Resume: Each student is required to complete a resume to submit along with their application for the Internship

Teacher Recommendations: Each student is required to obtain two (2) instructor recommendations as part of their application packet for the Internship experience.

Student Agreement: Signed by the student acknowledging that the STEM Internship Program is intended as an academic service, not a job service and that the student will meet and maintain the required standards set forth in the Internship Handbook

Class Schedule: The student provides this to help the student and mentor plan and set the internship hours for the Internship Experience

Learning Agreement: This outlines the scope of duties, responsibilities and goals developed collaboratively by the student, mentor and internship coordinator before the internship begins. This is signed by the student, mentor and STEM Academy Internship Coordinator during the official mentor/student meeting held prior to the beginning of the Internship Experience. The STEM Academy Internship coordinator will schedule these meetings during October-December 2015.

Daily Log Sheets: Each student must maintain a daily log sheet documenting their hours each week and list activities completed during their internship time. This must be signed by the mentor and submitted for credit at the end of the internship experience.

Written Self-Evaluation: Each student will submit a final written self-evaluation of the senior internship experience which will be due on the date of your presentation.

Student Presentation: The internship experience will culminate in a presentation that the student will make before the internship advisory committee, their mentor, their family, and their peers. The presentation will be 5-7 minutes in length, with an additional 3-5 minutes for questions and comments. Each presentation will have a time slot of 10 minutes scheduled and the time slots will be adhered to so that your mentor will be able to arrange his/her own schedule accordingly.

Mentor Evaluation: Each mentor will be given a form to complete at the end of the Internship experience.

On Site Visit: The mentorship location will be visited by the STEM Academy internship coordinator or a designer.

EXPECTATIONS: STUDENTS AND MENTORS

Safety: Students and mentors share responsibility for taking precautions in working with equipment and materials to ensure the safety of the student and others at the placement site.

Learning Agreement: A written Plan of Action, specifying the proposed internship activities/projects and responsibilities, is developed jointly by the student and mentor. The Learning Agreement is signed by the mentor and student and gives direction to the internship and serves as a basis for final evaluation. While the Learning Agreement gives direction to the internship, it is a flexible document, open to continuous update as the internship evolves over the course of a semester and circumstances change.

Evaluation: The final evaluation includes the student's satisfactory completion of the written self-evaluation, daily log, and presentation at the Senior Internship Luncheon, as well as the final evaluation by the mentor and the on-site evaluation by the STEM Academy Internship Coordinator.

EXPECTATIONS: MENTORS

Role: The role of the mentor is highly individualized. Common characteristics of a successful mentor include:

- Involvement in the student's project
- Willingness to serve as a role model in teaching the rituals, language, and expectations of the mentor's discipline/profession
- Guidance of the student's project and introduction to the professional standards and processes acceptable to the discipline/profession
- Commitment to developing the student's skills, knowledge, and abilities
- Enthusiasm towards the discipline/profession

Mentorship is not restricted to one individual and may include any professional who is able to provide guidance to the student in his/her selected area. Because mentors often have multiple responsibilities, some implement a collaborative approach to mentorship. Colleagues may also provide a variety of learning opportunities and perspectives that enrich the internship experience.

Evaluation: The coordinator will assess the student's performance through an on-site meeting with the mentor and by telephone contact. At the end of the program, the mentor evaluates the student's participation and performance, using the Mentor Evaluation Form. This feedback is considered in the student's final grade.

Responsibility for Reporting Absence and/or Concerns:

Mentors are requested to notify Susan Cash, the coordinator of the program at **434-832-7731**, scash@xlr8academy.com if students are unexpectedly absent from their internship. Concerns about the student's performance or ability to benefit from the internship experience should be discussed immediately with the coordinator.

EXPECTATIONS: STUDENTS

Attitude: The Senior Internship provides a unique learning experience which is **highly dependent** on your **positive attitude** and **self-motivation**. Your internship requires commitment, integrity, and responsibility. Indicate what you can do and what you want to learn; ask questions; assess how you can contribute; and accept some routine and tedium as part of the internship process. In return, Senior Experience provides you with opportunities to work directly with professionals in a chosen field and gain valuable insights into that profession. The benefits you reap, however, depend primarily on your initiative and motivation. A positive, proactive attitude, therefore, is the cornerstone of a successful internship because it permeates every task, large or small.

Attendance and Dependability: Your mentor has made a substantial commitment to you and the Academy and will provide you with opportunities for personal and professional growth. Your punctuality and dependability demonstrate respect and appreciation for your mentor's time and commitment. Regular weekly attendance during the semester is required. Any excused absence must be reported directly to your mentor and to the XLR8 STEM Academy as soon as possible prior to the absence. Although you are not required to attend your internship when school is closed, you are obligated to notify your mentor of your excused absence prior to that date.

Transportation: Transportation to and from the internship is the **sole responsibility of the student**. Parental permission is required for either public or private transportation arrangements.

Appearance: Dress appropriately. Your mentor and your mentor's colleagues are the best examples of appropriate attire. Your appearance reflects your judgment, self-respect, and professionalism. The self-discipline and self-regard you demonstrate by caring for your appearance is a basic indication that you have the maturity to take on responsibility in a professional environment. You represent both the STEM Academy and you. Make your mentor proud to be associated with you.

Daily Learning Logs: Since record keeping is an essential skill, you are required to keep a careful record of your internship activities in the notebook assigned for this purpose. The learning log is a record of your activities and helps you to organize your thoughts about the internship as time goes by. This record will be the guide for your self-evaluation Paper. It will also be the basis of documentation for any presentation or publication of your work. It is your responsibility to share this log with your mentor and obtain his/her weekly signature. After the log is signed by your mentor, it is submitted to the coordinator for review. Entries include: the date, activities performed, progress, and observations/findings/ results. You may also include personalized comments about your experience, feelings about your participation, reflections on personal growth, strengths and weaknesses, skills developed, frustrating and satisfying experiences, interactions between you, your mentor and colleagues, impact of internship on your college and career plans, etc.

Evaluation: In addition to regular attendance and satisfactory reports from your mentor, you are evaluated on the quality of your Written Self-Evaluation Paper. The final requirement is satisfactory performance in your presentation at the Senior Internship Luncheon.